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ABSTRACT

Articles from a conference on nontraditional education and state-level issues are presented. The first article by Frederic Jacobs and George B. Weathersby summarizes some of the major trends and policy issues regarding nontraditional education. Next Samuel B. Gould considers why states should support nontraditional education and what strategies are appropriate to make nontraditional education possible. Theodore J. Marchese considers the audience for nontraditional education, commitment at the state level for this type of education, the question of whether an existing postsecondary system should be the provider of nontraditional education, state rule-making and oversight, and the issue of quality of new educational forms. Jerome E. Lord discusses the use of technology in open learning. Ralph A. Duncan expresses the view that the state should take the lead in providing nontraditional forms of postsecondary education, and recommends a free-standing model, as opposed to one integrated with the traditional higher education institution. James M. Furman reviews some recent developments in Illinois to illustrate how a state goes about implementing nontraditional education. Rather than a free-standing nontraditional university, Illinois developed a consortia of existing public systems. There have been successes at the state level in initiating a statewide educational television network, in the support of nontraditional cooperative regional program efforts, and in support of student aid. (SW)

NONTRADITIONAL EDUCATION:

STATE-LEVEL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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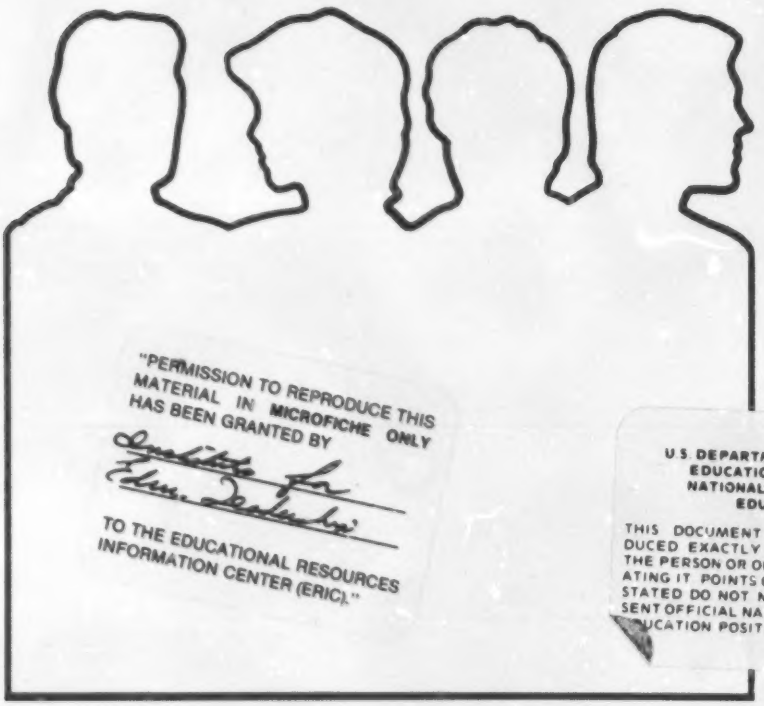

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A CONFERENCE HELD AT

HARVARD UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MAY 16-18, 1976

Postsecondary Education Convening Authority

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

HE 012 210

The Postsecondary Education Convening Authority (PECA) of the Institute for Educational Leadership commissioned Frederic Jacobs and George Weathersby of the Harvard Graduate School of Education to write a case study of the support and delivery of nontraditional educational services within a particular state during a period of retrenchment. The case, *Capitol Community College of Montana,* was administered at the HGSE conference, "Nontraditional Education: State-Level Issues and Concerns." The case is easily adapatable to a variety of classroom situations and is available to anyone from PECA, Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 310, Washington, D.C. 20036 at $3.00 for the first copy and $2.50 for all additional copies. An instructor's pamphlet with notes on how to administer the case and articles about the outcome of the case (which is based on an institution not in Montana) is included with each order.

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Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) (formerly Washington Internships in Education) is a national program designed to help provide future leaders the skills in policymaking they must have to exert effective and enlightened leadership in American education. Funds for the program are provided by the Ford, Rockefeller, and Cleveland Foundations.

Since 1965, the program has placed over 250 mid-career persons in one-year internships in public and private agencies involved in educational policy matters. Carefully recruited sponsors who pay the Fellow's salary serve as on-the-job mentors by demonstrating, through their daily tasks, how educational policy is shaped at the urban, state, or national level. In addition, through weekly meetings, Fellows have the opportunity to interact with authorities in education. National meetings of Fellows with other special groups contribute further to their understanding of educational policymaking. Costs of recruitment, placement, and programs are borne by the EPF Program.

Educational Staff Seminar (ESS)
Telephone: 293-3166

Educational Staff Seminar (ESS) is a professional development program designed for staff members employed by the Executive and Legislative Branches of the federal government in the field of education. It is designed to expose these federal education policymakers to existing programs worth noting around the nation, as well as to innovations, research and emerging ideas in the field. This is accomplished through luncheon and dinner meetings, seminars, and national and international field trips.

Established in 1969, ESS is funded by the Institute and by partial reimbursement from the government agencies served. In fiscal year 1975 ESS conducted 73 programs for over 2200 federal employees.

The Associates Program (TAP)
Telephone: 785-4991

The Associates Program (TAP) is an evolving IEL activity. Its emphasis up to now has been to provide seminars for legislators and other policymakers at state capitals. Begun in 1972 with three state educational seminars TAP now sponsors 22 seminars, all directed by Associates who, on a part-time basis, arrange 5 to 10 programs annually.

TAP maintains a network of state-level "generalists" (Associates) whose ties to IEL in the nation's capital provide rare linkages among federal and state education policy-setters. TAP encourages similar linkages among agencies and coalitions seeking to improve processes in state-level decision-making. It also sponsors national and regional conferences dealing with state-level responsibilities in education.

Washington Policy Seminar (WPS)
Telephone: 833-1737

The Washington Policy Seminar (WPS) brings select groups of educators and policymakers to the Capital for three to five days of intensive exposure to the people, processes, and institutions which shape federal education policy. Speakers for the Seminar include Members of Congress, Congressional staff, senior officials of the Executive Branch, leaders of educational lobbies and associations, journalists and seasoned "Washington watchers." Funding for the Seminar is provided by IEL general support funds and reimbursement by sponsoring organizations.

Postsecondary Education Convening Authority (PECA)
Telephone: 833-2745

Under a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, IEL has established an issue development service for consideration and transmission of key policy issues in post-secondary education. The Postsecondary Education Convening Authority (PECA) sponsors conferences, research efforts, task force groups and publications focusing on such issues as institutional licensing, consumer protection, state financing, and adult learning.

"Options in Education"
Telephone: 785-6462 of 833-9178

IEL and National Public Radio co-produce the "Options in Education" series, heard weekly over most of NPR's 190 member stations from coast to coast. Voice of America rebroadcasts the one-hour programs, and IEL makes cassettes and transcripts available at minimum costs. "Options" has received awards from the Education Writers Association (1974 and 1975) and from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (1974). Funds for "Options in Education" are provided by IEL, National Institute of Education, Robert S. Clark Foundation, NPR, and other grantors. A list of NPR member stations and a catalog of available cassettes and transcripts are available from IEL.

Career Education Policy Project (CEPP)
Telephone: 833-9051

The Career Education Policy Project (CEPP) airs the issues of education, work and society for educational decisionmakers. Funded by the U.S. Office of Education, CEPP uses the resources of other IEL programs – ESS and TAP – to inform both policymakers and the public of the issues and the potential of the career education movement. It also sponsors Washington Policy Seminars for policy-level career educators.

The Project on Compensatory Education (PCE)
Telephone: 833-9178

Project on Compensatory Education, responding to continuing state and federal emphasis on equal educational opportunity and the right of each child to an adequate education, is sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education. It will seek to identify the major public policy issues in the governance of compensatory education at the federal, state and local levels.

The project identifies strengths and weaknesses in current compensatory education governance policies, primarily by obtaining information from key policymakers, public officials, educators, as well as parents and others involved in compensatory education in the nation.

Family Impact Seminar (FIS)
Telephone: 296-5330

The Family Impact Seminar seeks to identify and assess the effect on families and children of a variety of public policies. The Seminar and its several task forces are composed of scholars and policymakers. Together, they examing and test the feasibility of developing "family impact statements" on selected government policies and programs. The specific issues to be examined are selected from a broad range of existing or proposed public policies. The policies may include some in such areas as education, health or welfare, which are specifically designed to help families and children. Other areas such as taxation, which are focused primarily on other objectives, but nevertheless affect families and children, also are examined.

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STATE-LEVEL ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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MARCH 1977

Contents

2 **A perspective on nontraditional postsecondary education**
by George B. Weathersby and Frederic Jacobs

6 **Nontraditional education and the states: Strategies and implications**
by Samuel B. Gould

9 **Nontraditional education: State-level issues and concerns**
by Theodore J. Marchese

12 **The use of technology in open learning**
by Jerome E. Lord

14 **The state's role in nontraditional education**
by Ralph A. Dungan and James M. Furman

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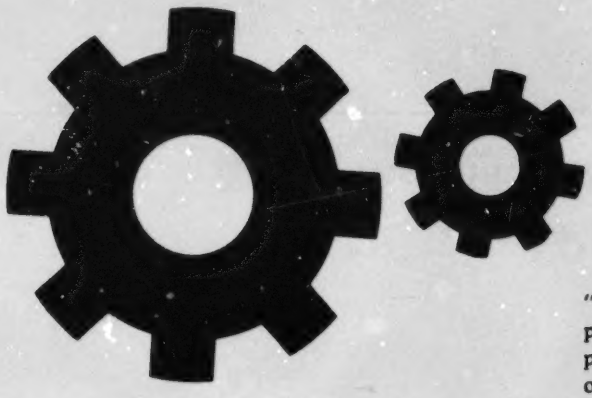
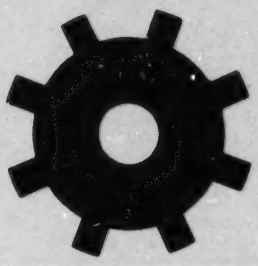




The last decade has witnessed important shifts in our national policy concerns for education: (1) expanding postsecondary education to include technical, vocational, proprietary and other specialized educational institutions; (2) broadening our assumptions t[illegible] 18-22-year-olds attend colleges to one encompass[illegible]lts of all ages who seek to pursue education in formal and informal settings; (3) altering the traditional liberal arts curriculum to include career, avocational, and self-fulfillment oriented curricula. These changes have increased access and opportunity for high school graduates at a time when the "population bulge" is reaching adulthood. The high school class of 1976 is the largest group to graduate in our nation's history and there will not be classes of comparable size in the foreseeable future.

This means that although a great deal remains to be done to improve the quality of schooling, we must devote attention over the next decades to the adults who will participate in postsecondary education. By 1981, demand for college by 18-year-olds will level off, and expansion of postsecondary education will occur in the "nontraditional" age groups and institutions. To prepare for this now, we must consider the state and national policies to encourage and modulate this growth.

To further the national discussions in this arena, we joined with the Education Commission of the States, the Postsecondary Education Convening Authority, the Association of Governing Boards, and the Office of New Degree Programs, a jointly sponsored activity of the College Entrance Examination Board and the Educational Testing Service, to convene 80–90 currently active professionals in this field in the spring of 1976. The articles which follow are an outgrowth of their and our thinking together.

The context of the federal role towards nontraditional postsecondary education was set by Vice President-elect Walter F. Mondale, who addressed the first annual Askwith Symposium on Postsecondary Education:

> "I believe that the thrust of lifelong learning has great potential. It offers the hope that all of us will be able to participate fully in and contribute to our society throughout our lives. It offers the hope that each one of us can continue to grow, to achieve his or her full potential, and to avoid getting stuck in the occupational and educational ruts which can lead to alienation and downright boredom."
>
> "A national commitment to lifelong learning could open up new and exciting opportunities for many groups in our society. As John Dewey said a half century ago: 'Education is not preparation for life. It is life itself.'"

Federal commitment is visible in the recently enacted Education Amendments of 1976 which not only created a new Office for Adult Education, but also explicitly included adult participation in virtually all postsecondary education programs sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education.

Meanwhile, many states have begun to reconsider their policies and procedures towards nontraditional clientele and programs. In the following pages Samuel Gould, former Chancellor of the State University of New York, Ralph Dungan, Chancellor for Higher Education in New Jersey, James Furman, Executive Director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education, all comment from their perspectives.

Jerome E. Lord, Chief, Open Learning System Branch of the National Institute for Education, discusses "open learning" and the access it provides especially through technology. Theodore Marchese, Director of Institutional Research at Barat College, was asked by the Postsecondary Education Convening Authority to reflect on the overall issues raised by the several days of discussion. To lead off the issue, Frederic Jacobs and George Weathersby, two of the organizers of this colloquium and faculty members at HGSE, summarize some of the major trends and policy issues in this area.

I believe the growth of nontraditional postsecondary education has many implications for state and federal policy which are just beginning to be explored. We are honored the authors of this issue have shared their journeys into the unknown so that we might all know a little more.

Paul N. Ylvisaker

A perspective on nontraditional postsecondary education

by George B. Weathersby and Frederic Jacobs

George Weathersby is an Associate Professor of Education at HGSE currently concerned with institutional planning and national policy, particularly in the area of postsecondary education. He is principal investigator of a USOE contract to study the development of institutions of higher education and the effects of public general institutional support.
Frederic Jacobs is also collaborating on the USOE project, and is Lecturer on Education at the School and Coordinator of the Field Experience Program. He was responsible for planning the national seminar on non-traditional education which is synthesized in this Bulletin.

Often it is those things which move the fastest that catch our eye. In the 1950s and 1960s the explosive growth in our nation's public schools, and subsequently in colleges and universities, dominated our attention in the field of education. With limited facilities and faculties, our program and resource priorities were devoted to youth continuing their education through undergraduate and even graduate levels. After World War II, the high school completion rate gradually rose to nearly 80 percent of the 16-20 age group, and the college-going rate rose to almost 60 percent of all high school graduates; both of these rates have increased by more than 50 percent in the past 25 years. Not only was the population burgeoning, but the rate at which individuals sought college admission was also accelerating.

Recently, we have experienced a slowing in the demand by young people for college admission, and our attention is shifting to continuing and accelerating demand by individuals over 25 years of age as they seek to begin or continue postsecondary education. These individuals are "nontraditional" students only to the extent that they are older than the youthful students who had so caught our attention two decades earlier. In the wider perspective of the last century of American higher education the new, nontraditional postsecondary education movement is neither new nor nontraditional.

The literary movement of the early 19th century provided through informal readings, discussions, and colloquia the primary instruction received by many of our best known authors, particularly women authors who had

Harvard Extension has offered adult classes leading to the A.A. and B.A. degrees since 1910

difficulty enrolling in the colleges of their day. The Bar examination for attorneys who wish to practice law is an example of competency-based certification dating back to the 19th century. Much later, similar state level examinations were developed for medicine and dentistry, and also for plumbing, electrical work, and other trades. The Workingman's Library long predated the "community resource center" and "distributed resource networks" of our day. The cooperative work study of the YMCA colleges began in the latter part of the 19th century, most notably at Northeastern University, and was the forerunner of the "education-work linkages" and "field-based education" popular as innovations today. With the exception of new

technologies such as computers and television, the "non-traditional" postsecondary education of today is a re-arrangement of programs offered sometime and somewhere in the past 150 years. This is not to disparage an idea because it is not new. On the contrary, it is to increase our courage to try ideas which differ from current practice, but which may have successful historical counterparts.

American postsecondary education is at a point of significant and relatively rapid change; in this paper we will document some of the dimensions of this change. Perhaps more importantly, however, perceptions of postsecondary education are changing even more rapidly than the field itself. The policy developments at the federal level reflect this rapidly changing awareness of postsecondary education. For a century after the Morrill Act of 1862 which established the land-grant colleges, the federal posture was one of laissez faire towards higher education. Motivated by possible defense contributions, there emerged during World War II a willingness to fund research in major universities and, following Sputnik, a willingness to support certain fields of study. For a complex set of reasons, including the actual and anticipated tremendous growth in enrollments, the first Higher Education Act was passed by Congress in 1965. This Act recognized only colleges and universities, at that time believed to number about 2000, and ignored several thousand trade, technical, hospital, and other schools, many of which were proprietary. The Act also ignored all degree candidate students who were not full-time and also all individuals who were enrolled, but who were not in degree programs.

By the end of the 1960s, members of Congress began to realize that the previous narrow definition of higher education disenfranchised over 6 million students who were not enrolled in degree programs, over 3 million students who were part-time, and over 7,000 accredited postsecondary educational institutions beyond traditional colleges and universities. In addition to all of these individuals and institutions which were largely unrecognized by the policies of the 1960s, were over 13 million adults pursuing education in thousands of formal course settings offered by employers, labor unions, community organizations, professional associations, hospitals, and other organizations.

Within a short period of time it became clear that the world of postsecondary education was much broader, more diverse, and more complex than envisioned by the Higher Education Act of 1965, and that this broader, more diverse and complex world had developed without any direct federal support or supervision. While it is true that Veterans' Benefits and Social Security Survivors' Benefits provided substantial amounts of funds to students attending this wider world of postsecondary education, it is also true that neither of these programs was considered a policy statement in higher or postsecondary education. The external constituencies and Congressional Committees dealing with VA and Social Security were different from the constituencies and committees that dealt with higher education.

The landmark legislation of the Education Amendments of 1972 expanded eligibility for the receipt of federal financial aid to students who attend part-time and who attend postsecondary noncollegiate institutions. The Education Amendments of 1976 went a step further, and recognized the learning needs of adults by extending eligibility even more broadly. Some state governments are now considering expanding their own programs to recognize the broader concept of postsecondary education adopted by the federal government.

Demography

The 18-21-year-old population has been rising steadily for over 20 years but will soon peak and then fall. In 1957, there were 8.7 million 18-21-year-olds. This number increased to 13.8 million in 1967 and 16.6 million in 1977. It is expected to fall to 14.5 million in 1987 and 14.0 million in 1997. In 1990 the 18-21-year-old population is expected to be the same in size as the 1970 population. Between 1980 and 1985, youth enrollments in colleges and universities are expected to decline approximately 25 percent.

These are harsh realities describing relatively predictable future conditions for the next 20 years because all of these people are already born. In the narrow perspective of youth enrollments, postsecondary education is rapidly approaching a state of falling demand; "steady state" that seems so negative in a time of growth may be our most optimistic hope in a generally declining market.

The adult population is experiencing the opposite trends. The "baby boom" of the 1950s has become the "bulge" of new adults of the 1970s. The adult population is increasing at more than 2 percent per year and will continue to do so for the next two decades. Furthermore, adult participation in postsecondary education is increasing at more than 7 percent per year. When the composition of adult demand for postsecondary education is analyzed, several observations become apparent. (See Table.) As the level of prior educational attainment increases, so does the proportion of individuals participating in postsecondary education; 4.1 percent of non-high school graduates participated versus 12.4 percent of high school graduates, 22.9 percent of those with some college, and 30.5 percent of individuals with a college or graduate degree. Since the late 1940s, more than one-half of the 17-19 age group has graduated from high school and the college going rate of the 18-21-year-olds has exceeded one-half of that population. Consequently, the composition of the adult population is shifting and will continue to shift upward in terms of prior education. This means that adult demand for post-secondary education probably will continue to increase because individuals with some college are more than twice as likely to continue their learning in a formal setting than individuals with no college.

A similar pattern is observed with respect to income. Relatively few of the lowest income groups participate (5.1 percent) while almost one out of five enroll annually in the $15,000 and over category (19+ percent). As the income distribution of Americans shifts upward—the result of many factors beyond and perhaps not even including education—the demand for postsecondary education will probably continue to rise.

PARTICIPATION RATES IN ADULT EDUCATION BY INCOME AND EDUCATION, 1972

Income	Highest Level of Educational Attainment: Non-High School Grad. %	High School Graduate %	Some College %	College or Grad. Degree %	All Educational Levels %
0 - 2,999	2.6	9.4	20.4	22.2	5.1
3,000 - 5,999	3.5	10.2	18.4	24.0	7.4
6,000 - 7,499	4.0	10.7	22.2	21.3	9.4
7,500 - 9,999	4.8	11.3	23.1	30.4	11.5
10,000 - 14,999	5.7	13.7	22.8	33.2	15.2
15,000 - 24,999	5.4	14.2	26.4	33.8	19.1
25,000 +	3.3	15.0	21.5	26.5	19.9
All Income Levels	4.1	12.4	22.9	30.5	12.4

Adult Education
National Center for Education Statistics

A final demographic point is that male and female participation rates are approximately equal. In terms of their proportion of degrees awarded and faculty positions held, women's participation reached its peak in higher education in the 1920s—a peak not yet regained. It is ironic that in the unrecognized and unsupported area of adult postsecondary education rough parity prevails before public intervention.

Finance

In a broad historical context, the financing of higher and postsecondary education is undergoing relatively rapid change at this time. In their early days, many private institutions were state-supported. Even federal land grant funds were used to support private institutions by proposing dual identities. The support of students, on the other hand, was long presumed to be an individual, family, institutional or charitable responsibility. Many colleges required students to work on or off campus as part of their tuition; still other institutions sought and received major endowments for students in financial need. The expansion of state supported "normal schools," a movement begun in Massachusetts in the early 19th century, was accompanied by an argument for low tuition as both an encouragement for youth to enter teaching and as a recognition of the poverty of those attracted to the schools. The land grant movement established the primacy of the agricultural and mechanical arts in the early days of the great state institutions; relatively open access and low tuition were, and remain, basic tenets of this movement.

Once again, the 1960's show the beginnings of a shift that now may alter significantly the incentives and financial forces in higher and postsecondary education: the shifting to the student of both the cost and the public assistance associated with college attendance. This shift has major implications for nontraditional postsecondary education.

Since 1961, an increasing proportion of the cost of operating our colleges and universities has been shifted to students. Between 1961 and 1974, the consumer price index increased by 55 percent, while the higher education price index, which more accurately reflects the goods and services purchased by higher education institutions, increased by 97 percent, and the student tuition price index increased by 120 percent. During a period in which the enrollment composition of higher education changed from approximately one-half of the students in public institutions to over three-quarters of the students in public institutions, the share of the costs of higher education borne by students still increased.

In the early 1970s there was a growing awareness of this shift, accentuated by the apparent tuition gap between public and private institutions, and by the alarming information on institutional financial health. The Education Amendments of 1972 extended the principle of student based financial assistance much further than it had been before: student-based financial assistance is now the major means by which the federal government provides funds to postsecondary education.

One consequence of the shift to students as a basis for finance is that eligibility for federal funds is based on personal characteristics such as previous enrollment, rate of attendance, financial condition, cost of attendance at a particular school, and so forth. By varying some of the eligibility criteria, one can have a large impact on the nontraditional clientele and/or on the nontraditional programs. For example, extending eligibility to part-time students, in non-degree programs in all non-profit organizations, which is not the current policy, we hasten to add, would open up public support to several million adults attending programs offered by several thousand organizations. Permitting foregone income to be recognized for what it is—the largest single cost to an adult in pursuing his or her education—is another example of a relatively minor change

in definition that could have a profound impact on adult attendance, and on the costs of such programs to the public.

Another consequence of the shift to students of an increasing responsibility for the financing of their own education is that the determination of the worthiness of an educational program can be left increasingly to the adult student. Potentially, this opens up a much wider range of possible learning settings, and it also increases the likelihood of consumer fraud. Accompanying the greater latitude afforded individuals and institutions is the concomitant responsibility for more and valid consumer information and avenues by which aggrieved individuals may seek redress. In several states this is the responsibility of the Attorney General, many of whom are, for the first time, taking the claims and practices of traditional as well as nontraditional institutions seriously. Accountability as a concept is being extended from the directly state-aided institutions to include all institutions which enroll students which receive public funds, and it is being extended from a question of the efficacy of an academic program to the broader realm of fair business practices and contract fulfillment.

A longer term potentiality is that a student-based financing system might emerge into a work-related recurrent education program that would provide support for employees to take time off periodically to engage in structured learning experiences that would further their personal and professional development. Although some European and labor union-based examples exist, there is no consensus on how to proceed in this area. Two-thirds of the adults now enrolled report that they are seeking to improve their job performance or get a new job as the purpose of their involvement in postsecondary education. Reviewing current practice will provide some basis for extrapolating to a broader recurrent education program.

Social philosophy

As the tides of social change rise and fall, it is difficult to tell if a new wave is a fad, or if it signals some significant change of direction. We have argued that this is a time in which some apparent reversals or shifts are the understandable consequences of long existing and well-known trends in demography, enrollment, and finance. Coupled with these more quantitative trends, there appear to us to be several mutually reinforcing trends in our basic philosophical approach to our recognition and support of postsecondary education.

Postsecondary education has become an entitlement, especially for young adults. Implicitly we have argued in current public policy that at least four years of postsecondary education should be available to anyone who is willing to pursue it, regardless of the labor market, regardless of the individual's characteristics (including ability), almost regardless of the setting in which he or she chooses to study, and with the least possible regard for the student's family financial resources. All of these mark significant departures of public policy from 20 years ago, and we believe they reflect the emerging social value that all individuals are entitled to essential and desirable social services. In this regard, education is like health care, housing, or nutrition; everyone has some social claim on society's resources to enable a minimum standard level of consumption. Once these patterns of entitlement are broadened, it is very unlikely that they will be readily contracted because even part-time students are full-time voters. The political momentum of entitlement programs is very large.

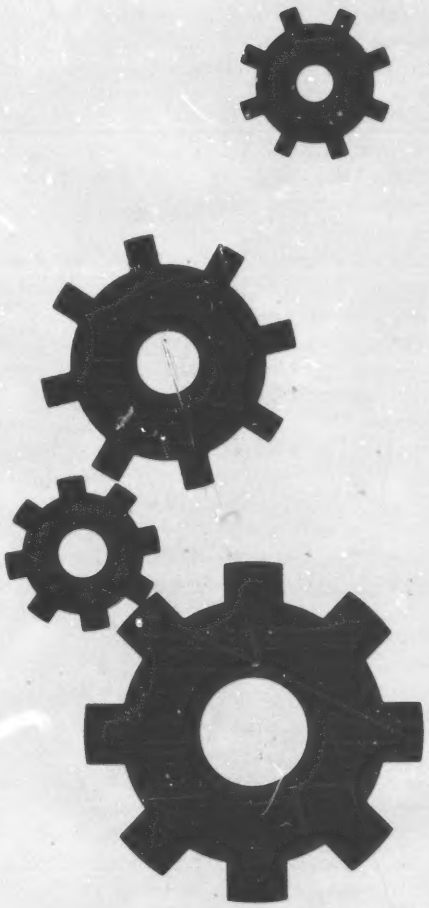
This is a counter-intuitive and complex argument. Postsecondary education has become increasingly an entitlement because as a society we believe it is a positive, constructive experience both personally and professionally. The more broadly the entitlement is exercised, the more individuals who take advantage of postsecondary education, the less will be the relative advantage received by those who partake over those who do not. This social philosophy is the opposite of an investment mentality which seeks to maximize the distinctiveness of goods or services. Having only one specialist in any area maximizes the return to that individual. But restricting access in order to maximize returns to current practitioners is philosophically contradictory to expanding entitlements for open participation. Said another way, entitlement addresses the right to consume not the promise that ultimately it will turn out to be an optimal economic investment.

A final philosophical consideration of postsecondary education which we want to identify, is the extent to which the postsecondary education enterprise has become, and will continue to be, an important element in the process of social change. In this world of, at best, highly imperfect responses to largely unsolvable problems, we need some process of ongoing re-evaluation, redesign, and renewal. In our society, the majority of our labor force now is, and increasingly, will be, in the service sector. Our major social problems, as we have sadly learned, are not problems of technology, production, or mobilization but are problems of software, of human-scale programs, of designing human systems that have the capacity to learn and to improve. While a candid assessment would have to be that we do not now know how to solve the crucial and vexing social system problems of our day, we believe the process of inquiry, experimentation, evaluation, confrontation of conflicting evidence, administered with a concern for individual and professional growth—in other words, our concept of a healthy postsecondary educational institution—is the process most likely to lead us to successive approximations of understanding and, informed by that understanding, thoughtfully considered action.

The broader context of postsecondary education we describe is an abstraction from a complex reality. The emerging forces and trends capture our attention somewhat more than they might if we were all aware of the evolution of changes in demography, enrollment, and finance which we have described. Similarly, the apparent shifts in public policy also have a broader context in which the apparently contradictory values of entitlement and investment have a resolution. Finally, there is the concern that postsecondary education may not be the most appropriate process for establishing a process for social change and renewal in social systems.

Nontraditional education and the states: Strategies and implications

by Samuel B. Gould



Robert Frost once said in his usual incisive fashion "Change is truth in and out of favor." And Justice Holmes, in his equally cogent way, cautioned that "every idea is an incitement." What we can add out of our own experience, however, is that even the most exciting ideas leading to change are slow in being recognized and that change itself is even slower in coming, especially in education.

In spite of a steady increase in the number of nontraditional programs and in spite of the proven success of many, there is still far too little widespread knowledge about these, and unwarranted skepticism about their value and capabilities.

To be completely truthful, however, I must point out that nontraditional education, whether in America or worldwide, is no longer the mystery and, therefore, the threat it once seemed to be in the eyes of many people. It is old enough by now to be troubled by its original name and keeps searching for another, such as "open learning" or "alternatives in learning." It is old enough to have its full share of adherents and detractors. Most of all, it is old enough and developed enough not to be ignored as an educational concept with practical outcomes worthy of consideration.

Efforts to define nontraditional education have invariably led to less than unanimous agreement or satisfaction with the results. One definition, which describes an attitude rather than a system, and was offered in the final report of the Commission on Non-Traditional Study in 1973:

> "It is an attitude that puts the student first and the institution second, concentrates more on the former's needs than the latter's convenience, encourages diversity of individual opportunity, and de-emphasizes time and space or even course requirements in favor of competence and, where applicable, performance. It is not a new attitude; it is simply a more prevalent one than before. It has concern for the learner of any age and circumstance, for the degree aspirant or the person who finds a sufficient reward in enriching life through constant, periodic, or occasional study. . ."

As Chairman of the Commission on Nontraditional Study, Samuel B. Gould helped to identify the significant issues and to point to the potential and promise of nontraditional learning. As one of the acknowledged leaders and experts in expanding educational access and opportunity, he is frequently called upon to comment on matters of policy and implementation. This following was the keynote address at the Harvard conference last year. Prior to serving on the Commission, Dr. Gould was Chancellor of the State University of New York. Previously, he was Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara and President of Antioch College.

Such a definition makes possible many elements: new populations to be educated, individualized learning, freedom of access, diversity of programs, flexibility of learning methods including modern technologies, a pace for the learner according to individual qualifications, career improvement as well as life enrichment, and an understanding of the concept of learning as a lifelong process. It is a definition reminding us that as a democratic nation we are concerned with *inclusion* of as many people who can benefit from more learning rather than their *exclusion*.

The idea that educational opportunities should be available to all who can benefit from them has been in the consciousness of civilized nations for centuries. History offers a documented record of efforts to make the idea a practical reality, never with full success but always with an awareness that there is merit in such a concept. As a random example, in the seventeenth century Crómwell moved toward creating new universities in Great Britain encompassing more practical education for the ordinary citizen and representing a more democratic pattern. These moves, unfortunately, were successfully blocked by Oxford and Cambridge and totally eradicated by the Restoration. But the idea persisted even though it took almost three centuries for the "red-brick" universities to emerge. And today there is the British Open University reaching out all across Great Britain with an enrollment at last report of over 47,000 adults from all walks of life.

In the United States the record is dramatic, even when one is motivated by a certain degree of impatience. The principle of equality of educational opportunity is generally espoused, and great strides forward have been taken. The land-grant colleges, the community colleges, the large numbers of people taking advantage of continuing and adult education are positive proof of a desire to open new doors to learning for those who can find benefit from it and of how some doors have been opened. The trend toward *inclusion* rather than *exclusion* is unmistakable. What has also been unmistakable in this burgeoning of numbers is that the person, the learner, can easily be submerged in the mass, can be surrounded with bureaucratic structures or academic rigidities and can soon lose both individual identity and incentive. If additional thousands or even millions are to be educated—a praiseworthy goal in a democratic society—care must be taken to protect the needs of the individual and to adapt the learning process to those needs, whether they be for a degree or whatever else. It is an open opportunity, but open only in the sense that the extent of opportunity matches the qualifications of the learner.

In addition, a rather sudden awareness has developed that many learning alternatives are being offered—and frequently with praiseworthy competency—by agencies outside the formal academic establishment. It is now a fact that as many persons avail themselves of these external, non-academic alternatives as those who choose academic institutions. Business, industry, labor, governmental agencies, social and cultural agencies, professional organizations, the military, and others are increasingly active and enterprising in their development of attractive and appropriate learning possibilities to meet individual needs. A good many of these alternatives came into being because the would-be learner found no other way to reach his or her educational goal within the limitations and responsibilities of adulthood.

There is no longer any reason to doubt that present and future activities in the area of educational alternatives are and will continue to be of major concern in the United States and in other parts of the world. They represent a concept that reaches into every level of education, even to the doctoral degree. If this concept is to be developed intelligently, it will be only through a broad overview of the pertinent issues; through local, state, national, and international initiatives; through public and private participation and collaboration in strengthening what can be identified and tested; and through careful nurture of an opportunity for millions of people to transform lifelong learning from a slogan to a reality.

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The most nontraditional thought we need to grasp is that life was never intended to be segmented where learning is concerned. Youth may well be a period in which the dominant activity is education. But education has an important, an appropriate, and a recurrent role to play in all the rest of life as well. Until we understand and believe this, we stand in danger of becoming a nation suffering from arrested development. If we concentrate the total educational goal on youth, all the rest—adulthood, upward mobility in careers, life enrichment, the elderly—is left to chance and the bludgeonings of experience. This can become a national tragedy when, for lack of education, we mistake shoddiness for quality, whether in goods or integrity, and when we mistake sensation for sensitivity. The growth of a nation depends not only on the rise of its gross national product; it stems also from the power in the minds of its citizens and the humanity in their hearts.

The simple but basic questions are these: Why should the states support nontraditional education? And if there are valid reasons for such support, what are the appropriate strategies to make it possible?

The *why* of support: The state has a responsibility to all its citizenry, not youth alone. Every survey of the past few years, whether national, regional, or statewide, reflects the fact that large numbers of potential learners are eager for new opportunities. The Commission on Non-Traditional Study found in its national survey that over 80,000,000 people were so disposed. Their needs can be fulfilled realistically mainly by nontraditional methods. The service the state could and should provide to these broader constituencies is an important factor not only in the betterment of people's lives but in the strengthening of the economy. Education is still a sound investment in a nation's future; in a democratic nation this means education of diverse types for many and diverse citizens. The day we give up this belief will mark the beginning of our decline.

Nontraditional education is worthy of support because it stimulates the kinds of educational change desirable for

learners of all ages. There have been far too many passive, unmotivated would-be learners in the past. And some of the traditional approaches to learning, unfortunately, not only make possible but encourage passivity. By placing a major burden of responsibility upon the student, nontraditional education makes it very difficult for the student to be passive. In order to succeed, he or she must have good reasons to participate, must be highly motivated toward an individual goal, and must exert a high degree of self-discipline.

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The second of the two questions was, "What are appropriate strategies to consider?" Or to put this another way, "If the states are in a mood to examine this educational possibility seriously, where do we start and how do we proceed?" The fact that at least 13 states are already searching for answers to these questions gives me courage to suggest some additional avenues toward progress.

First of all, I would recommend strongly the active involvement and leadership of the Education Commission of the States. This, as we all know, is an organization uniquely designed for effective interaction between state government and the academic world. Among its functions are those of interpreting educational needs to state government and assisting in the creation of whatever processes are necessary to encourage reasonable actions. It seems to me that ECS should consider nontraditional learning a major component in future planning, should design a project dealing with this alternative approach that becomes part of its regular agenda, and should call upon whatever expertise it requires from outside sources to augment its own staff knowledge. These sources may be individuals with experience and academic institutions or agencies in the forefront of the nontraditional movement. Such organizations as the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges, the American Association for Higher Education, the Association for Innovation in Higher Education come to mind immediately, and there are others such as the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning and the National Center for Educational Brokering.

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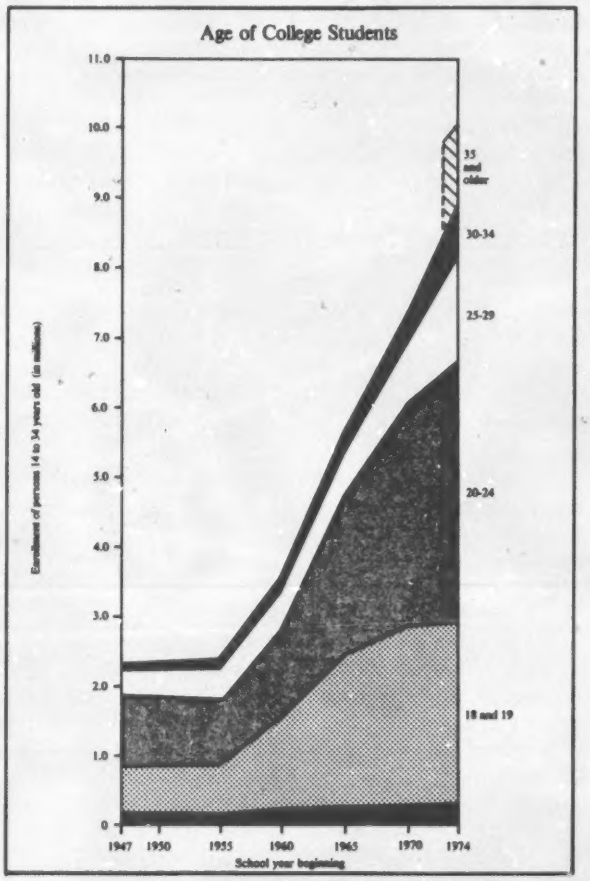
The efficacy of nontraditional education, when it is properly planned and presented, remains firm. It is time for the states to assume a major role in exploring its potentiality and making full use of what it offers toward expanding learning opportunities for hitherto relatively unserved populations, especially adults. Such exploration and use should not be limited to our formal system of higher education but should include all the alternative possibilities that exist within the resources of communities. And both the exploration and use should be developed in collaborative fashion with a new kind of partnership emerging that increases the educational options for learners of many types.

This is not theoretical dreaming, "pie in the sky," or some other sort of vague ideal. It meets a practical need that has been neglected for too long. Continuing neglect is dangerous. Many of our commentators on the social scene in America tell us we have lost our way somehow, that our changing values are flawed, that our educational patterns are inadequate and limited. This may be so, but if it is true the situation is not irretrievable. We are a nation accustomed and disposed to change; we have met crises of many kinds before and overcome them. What we face now is not so much a crisis as a necessity to reassess our goals and make better use of available resources to achieve them.

The effort to lift the sights and improve the capabilities of all the people needs to be a total one, inclusive, reflective not of the perfectibility of humankind but of a belief in how worthy it is to work in the interests of its betterment. If such an effort is to be made, the leadership role of the states becomes vital. As is true in every other aspect of our lives, we get the kind of education we deserve. What we deserve depends on the scope of our vision and the degree of our determination to keep that vision broad, clear, and uncompromised by limits that stand in the way of everyone's capabilities and aspirations. We can make that determination strong enough so that everyone may deserve and receive the best that can be offered.



The Condition of Education
National Center for Education Statistics

Nontraditional education: State-level issues and concerns

by Theodore J. Marchese

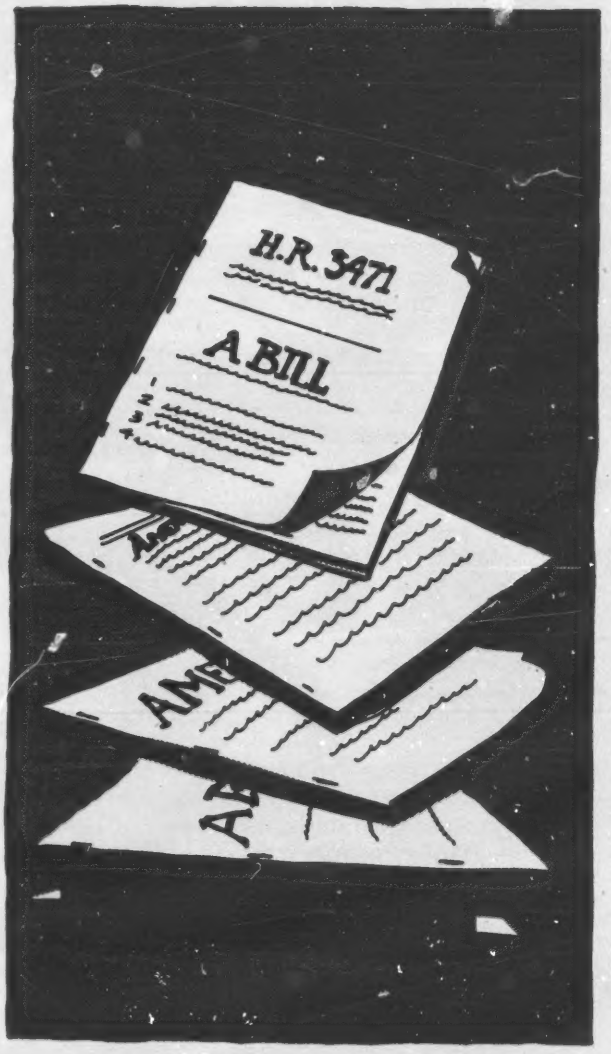
Dr. Theodore Marchese, Director of Institutional Research at Barat College, Lake Forest, Ill., was commissioned to synthesize the proceedings of the HGSE conference by the Postsecondary Education Convening Authority (PECA) of the Institute for Educational Leadership, one of the conference's cosponsors. PECA is supported by a grant from HEW's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

The steady spread of alternative learning forms in postsecondary education—of "nontraditional education"—has manifested a series of disjunctures between the new forms and longer-established postsecondary systems. These disjunctures are most keenly felt today at the state level.

To explore this, the Harvard Graduate School of Education hosted an 80-person conference in Cambridge on May 16-18, 1976, bringing together practitioners and scholars of nontraditional education (NTE) and state-level officers responsible for postsecondary-education policy. Among the latter were legislators, trustees, higher education commissioners, institutional licensing officials, and a variety of staff persons from executive and legislative offices.

The educators at Harvard reflected the considerable range of endeavors designated "nontraditional": people who would award credit in new ways—by portfolio, exam, or committee judgment—and others who would eschew credit-counting for a focus on competence and performance; people operating new media-based delivery systems; people who would educate through use of community persons and facilities, or employ "mentors" and learning contracts; "brokers" running community-based advisement, referral, and advocacy centers; and people running special programs from an existing "traditional" campus and others from free-standing institutions with no campus at all.

Generalizations are hazardous about so disparate a collection of endeavors, but *NTE activity tends to focus on creation of accessible and diversified learning alternatives and employ pedagogy that is learner and environment based.* If the traditional campus has been oriented toward the younger, full-time student, NTE's orientation is toward the older adult studying part-time. If the former is characterized by institutions large in size with structured curricula, NTE tends toward small structures and the individualization of learning. But whatever their differences,



both would claim to be in the same business—collegiate education—and would seek award of the same credential, such as the bachelor's and doctoral degree. That combination of difference and sameness, as one might anticipate, raises issues—especially at the state level.

In the United States, degree-granting authority is primarily a state-level responsibility. Nobody may begin a postsecondary institution without the state's permission, in the form of a charter. Once in being, most states have active licensing, approval, and certification boards whose program requirements must be met. State governing/coordinating and scholarship boards have obvious powers, especially over the fiscal climate for institutions. Should service not equal promise, it is the state's attorney who most likely will bring complaint. These are not the only hurdles to full operation, of course, (there is accreditation and eligibility for federal funding), but state-level concerns are likely to be paramount in the establishment of an NTE enterprise.

Educators with a sense of history know that much that is now called "nontraditional" has been around for more than a few years. And so, of course, have the states. Why the fuss now? The answer lies in developments on both sides. NTE, recently infused with large doses of federal and foundation grant money, has emerged as a sizeable force within postsecondary education, both in size and influence. On the state side, recent conditions of financial stringency, of skepticism about institutional claims, and of consumer advocacy have led to a tightening of state-level oversight and review mechanisms. NTE, as the "newcomer on the block" looking for approval and funding, is most likely to feel the pinch. Not infrequently, NTE may find itself at odds with established educational systems, and the state may have a new set of policy questions before it. At the Harvard conference, five large, generalized problems dominated the debates which will be discussed briefly.

A new audience for education?

A first issue raised by state policy-makers and educators concerns the audience for NTE: What is it that people need or want that they are not now getting through established educational mechanisms? How many such people are there? To what kind of new opportunities will they respond? The questions are equally pertinent to the legislator confronted with a request to fund a new external degree program and to the educator attempting to tap into new clientele with a responsive program.

The question is especially pertinent because, at least until now, NTE advocates have generally not argued that their approaches should *supplant* those of the established university in educating the bulk of younger undergraduates (though such a case could be made); instead, NTE has tended to focus on learning needs of previously unserved or underserved populations: the adult worker at mid-career, the returning community woman, the elderly, the isolated minority or rural person, the drop-out from traditional systems, and so on. The legislator, in effect, is being asked not to alter a state service but to create a new one, and thus his or her question: Who are these people and what is it they need?

State interests in lifelong learning

If there is an audience for NTE, then what should a state's commitment to it be? Is there a state interest in the continuing education of people beyond the traditional college age? These questions are important ones in postsecondary education today: enrollment of part-time adult learners is said to be growing by 15 percent a year, and the federal government, in the Education Amendments of 1976, has, for the first time, explicitly committed itself to developing a national policy of "lifelong learning."

Most states have not yet come to a similar commitment; Their postsecondary systems focus by structure and habit on younger adults. The state provides well for the education of its sons and daughters who would be engineers, farmers, or accountants, but much less well for the 45-year-old family head who must re-tool for a different career. Older adults do enroll in traditional campus programs, of course, though in limited situations and not nearly in the numbers the adult-learning surveys suggest might be in need. Older adults face substantial barriers of access, money, and unresponsive programming; the system is "front-loaded": with the best chance at education available to the young, prior to the start of family and employment.

NTE: Existing or new institutions?

If states are interested in NTE, then what will be the best locus for it to occur: an existing postsecondary system or a new, alternative set of institutions founded on the premise of NTE?

The question is not an easy one; larger states have a several-billion-dollar investment in an existing array of postsecondary institutions. In some states, that system is already over-built. In a few years, the traditional cohort of students these institutions have served will decline in numbers by a fourth. What they do in the Eighties will be no less valuable; they simply will have less of it to do.

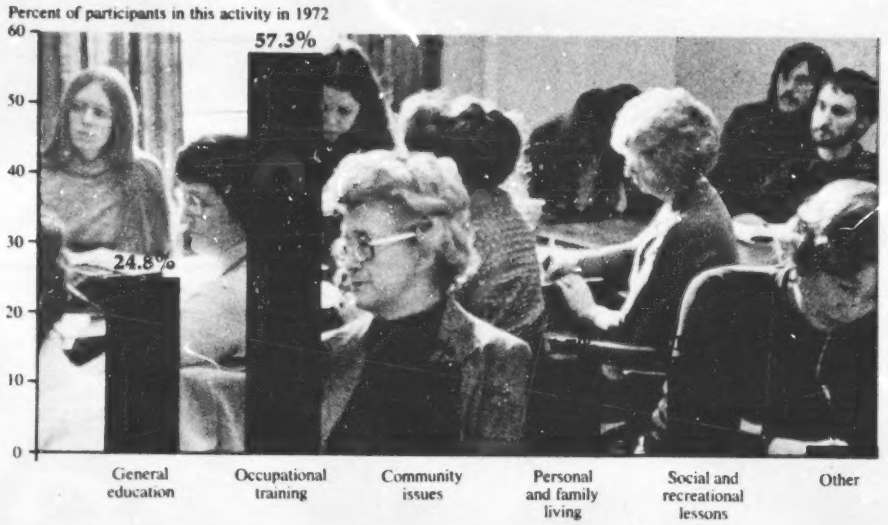
Many people doubt the wisdom of imposing NTE on the existing university or the practicality of "converting" disciplinary scholars to the use of new educational forms with unfamiliar clientele. NTE just is not the same thing as university instruction and older adults are not asking for what younger undergraduates are.

State rule-making and oversight

A fourth set of concerns flows from the above: what state-level conditions impede the development of NTE?

Here, concerns tend to differ by sector, public or private. They are less philosophical and more easily subject to resolution. The root problem in both cases, as NTE people see it, is lack of understanding or sympathy for the new educational ventures they propose. The problems arise most frequently in dealings with state postsecondary governance and licensing agencies, and in particular with those agencies' use of standards which presume a traditional institution or mode of instruction.

Enrollment in Adult Education Activities



The Condition of Education
National Center for Education Statistics

For NTE programs in the public sector, the issue most frequently surfaces in the application of funding and workload formulas. The former are typically "enrollment-driven"—one counts opening-fall FTE's, credit hours, or some such, applies a multiplier, and obtains a figure for state support. But what if, as in many NTE programs, degrees are not pursued via the award and counting of credit hours, or if there are so many enrollment statuses that a simple, meaningful FTE count cannot be calculated? And how is an NTE program to comply with a state requirement that faculty members teach so many class hours a semester when continuous mentoring of contract learning, not the teaching of classes by semester, is the mode of operation?

On the private side, issues are likely to arise in dealings with the state office responsible for licensing private degree-granting institutions. A number of such offices employ "minimum standards" criteria for the approval of new institutions, stipulating, for example, a library of so many books, a facility with given characteristics, or a full-time faculty with certain qualifications—all appropriate to a traditional college, perhaps, but not to a given nontraditional one. And the problem may be not just administ-ative (as is the FTE matter on the public side); criteria for licensure are typically written into statutes and require legislative action for change.

The "quality" issue

Issues of "quality" represented the fifth main concern of the Harvard conferees; Put as a question, how can educators and state officials best assure development of new educational forms meeting high tests of quality?

The problem may be viewed as one of protecting the student-consumer and the integrity of NTE, as one calling for a tightening of state and voluntary quality-control mechanisms. But the "quality" issue is broader than that. It involves expectations, even demands that NTE programs subject themselves to the highest standards of evaluation and outside review, that they "prove themselves." NTE people justly point out that people are asking them to meet tests not applied to traditional institutions and forms, and that contemporary evaluation methods often are not able to produce the kind of data demanded. The demand for data, then, will often be viewed as having a political tinge to it, as a rhetoric for protecting hegemonies by putting down NTE. A backlash against NTE was said to be apparent in some states, with "quality" the catchword.

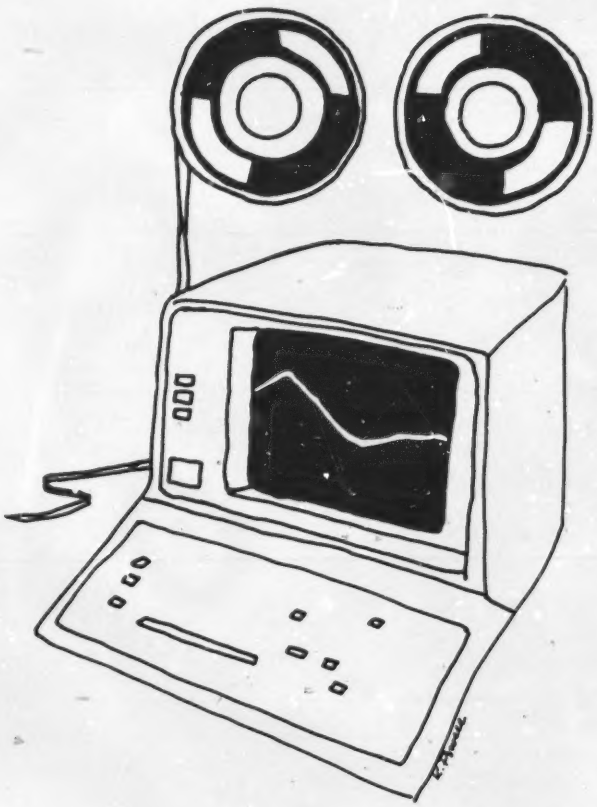
Even so, there are factors inherent in the movement and its current situation which raise legitimate call for evaluation and assurance of quality. One is that a great many NTE programs have sold themselves to funding agencies on the basis of being experimental, and this raises an obligation to evaluate and speak to questions of benefits, costs, and wider feasibility. A second is that as NTE dispenses with many of the traditional inputs and processes of education for a focus on learner outcomes, it imposes a new form of evaluative responsibility upon itself (measuring and describing outcomes in ways understandable to the public)—especially since it would award the credentials of traditional education, such as the bachelor's or doctoral degrees.

Finally, NTE's own interests are served by the assumption of high standards of evaluation and reporting, in the public respect it thereby wins for itself and in the knowledge it generates for the improvement of educational practice. Thus, too, it continually strengthens the case for public investment in the potential it holds for fuller realization of a learning society.

The use of technology in open learning

by Jerome E. Lord

Jerome Lord is currently Program Officer and Chief of the Open Learning Systems Branch of the National Institute of Education. Prior to that, he served on NIE's Task Force on Technology and Productivity and as an Educational Program Specialist at the National Center for Educational Technology. His interest in educational technology complements his liberal arts training and experience; he has a B.A. in classics and philosophy from Georgetown University, an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia, and a Ph.D. in History also from Columbia. The following is excerpted from a larger manuscript which he has prepared.



Open learning comprehends educational services for the old and the young, for the preschooler and the teenager and those in middle life. It is both institutionally and noninstitutionally based, and ranges in magnitude from a new project for 10 to a large system for thousands.

The increasing popularity of open learning stems not from the fact that it replaces anything, but that it adds something. The variety and magnitude of the methodologies that have come into use in open learning expand access to education, change the conditions under which people learn, and attempt new kinds of managerial and fiscal economies.

In a short space of time, the idea of open learning has come into widespread use. Yet, open learning has no real social or political expectation attached to it; it is not yet a national strategy, and remains at present a widely disparate set of responses to a variety of needs and opportunities. It is a loose and vague term whose appeal stems at least in part from the frontier appeal of the word "open", suggesting simultaneously that its predecessor or alternate, which is the regular schooling system, is "closed" or very restricting. The idea of open learning suggests as well a somewhat cohesive effort to formulate and carry out successfully a well-considered social intervention to accomplish and to right educational wrongs.

There is a momentum towards the further popularization of education, and we call it open learning. It is not a revolution, but a progression made through a series of major and minor experiments in the further individualization of education and it is characterized by three shifts: One is from teacher-based education to learner-based education. A second is a shift from school-based education to environment-based education. The third is a shift from the passive learning process (I am taught) to a more active mode (I learn, I teach, I teach myself). What is new about open learning for adults is the desire, though not the demonstrated need, to establish noninstitutional foci and systems of nontraditional education. The United States has been slow in developing, adopting, or adapting new learning and teaching methodologies, new assessment techniques, and new (or better) ways of sustaining such efforts. Any open learning system as it presently exists, must be considered experimental. This is particularly true when the system is not directly and fully tied to a traditional fiscal source.

Since large-scale systemic changes in educational services for adults in the United States are at the frontier

between the land of the traditional and the land of the original, and are the most fruitful subjects of policy development, then policy makers at the federal, state and local levels must take into conscious account the important factors about the world of the adult and the world of post-secondary education in the late 1970s that open learning systems represent.

Access to open learning is, of course, largely dependent on the technology available to those who seek open learning. Technology may still be threatening, particularly to the more conservatively trained educators in this nation, but it is also capable of high drama and high impact. Consider, for example, this startling fact reported by the United States Census: in one year, the people of this country watch some 40,000,000 years of television. The disparity between the potential of media and other technology for educational services at all levels of the informal and formal schooling system, and the degree to which it has been used to date, is one more illustration of the phenomenon that change takes a very long time.

Television, for example, can be used to demonstrate experiments, especially where equipment or phenomena to be observed are large, expensive, inaccessible, or difficult to observe, where the experimental designs are complex, the measurement of experimental behavior not easily reduced to a single scale, and where experimental behavior may be influenced by uncontrollable (but observable) variables. Television can be used also to bring primary resource material to students, and particularly for purposes of recognition, analysis, and evidence. Like radio, television can be used to test students' ability, to increase students' sense of belonging, to reduce the time required by students to master content, to help students pace themselves, to establish academic credibility to the outside world, and to recruit or attract new students. Clearly there are a lot of things that the media can do.

Policy makers are conscious of the fact that the richness and diversity of technology, for all its wonders, is complicated and expensive, but in the long run may have payoffs both educational and economic. Its most immediate effect, its most visible short-range effect, is that it broadens tremendously the *choices* available to those exploring new initiatives in the learning process. Technology may popularize adult open learning even more in the last quarter of this century. Policy makers need to ask not whether technology is useful or effective, (that has been proven and re-proven), but whether the educational goals of adults can be *reasonably, effectively,* and *cost-effectively* serviced by technology. Though the situation of the small village deep into the heart of Alaska is atypical, it serves to illustrate the point. Isolated, snow-bound through virtually half the year, almost inaccessible except by airplane, a small Alaskan village of 400 people needs all kinds of services. If the policy is to provide services, then that policy is acted out on the basis of the alternative ways of providing them. If such services cannot be offered in person, then technology becomes the extension, the teacher, the resource. When the legislature of Alaska decided to provide year-round health care as best it could to the inhabitants of small villages, it turned to satellites for both radio and video contact. In short, technology *is* a choice.

It is possible conceptually to construct a graph to describe differentials among adult learners by two different sets: those relating to the learning process, (learning style; medium/media; content; services; and conditions of delivery and assessment), and those containing the learner variables (age, educational accomplishment, sex, work, socio-economic level, and geographical location). A great deal of market research has gone into the initial discovery of the learner variables, and a great deal of work, far beyond the latitude of market research, is now needed to fill in all the important gaps related to the cognitive styles, habits and conditions which apply to the process. In addition, a mountain of basic research studies and experiments dating back to the early 1950s shows that (1) distance is an important controllable factor in learning effectiveness; (2) media are, as often as not, as good as, or better than, face-to-face education services; (3) different methodologies work differently for some adults than for others, etc. This work gives us the parameters, but not the perimeters, of the research that is needed to improve the diagnosis and prognosis stages of the learning process.

Despite this, there is a common ground on which to start when it comes to thinking about the learners who presumably are the beneficiaries of open learning initiatives. These learners need, or want, the following: (1) continuous, if not always frequent, contact with peer groups; (2) constant feedback from the teacher, and personal guidance; (3) a cautious instructional pace with controls built in all along the way; (4) assistance with skills development; (5) carefully designed instruction which moves gradually from practical to conceptual levels. Data indicate that these needs will be particularly true of new adult learners digging into education at the postsecondary level for the first time, or for the first time in many years. They show a desire to keep their self-esteem, to keep their own learning style and goals in check, under their own control, recognizing that in a process where the distractions and the self-awareness are equally great, they prefer to dictate as many of the conditions of learning as they can. The implications of these generalizations are enormous.

One of the many challenges of open learning is the opportunity it can provide for individualization, even in circumstances where mass media play a role in instruction and assessment. The process should start with a diagnosis of ability, be followed by instruction in the requisite competencies in order to help the individual achieve his/her specific learning goals. Throughout the process, there must be opportunities, styles and choices provided for the learner. Often, in open learning, the ideology of mass instruction is still applied to the individual, but as the numbers of learners looms larger and larger, gross inadequacies appear; the larger the adult learner population involved in open learning, the greater the need to label any applications of open learning methods and opportunities *experimental* because we cannot expect to transfer to the domain of individual learning the dogmas and assumptions of traditional classrooms. There are many lessons still to be learned, and it is apt to be an expensive, complicated, sophisticated, time-consuming business. But it is the logical goal towards which the phenomenon of open learning is leading us.

The state's role in nontraditional education

Two contrasting viewpoints

by Ralph A. Dungan

In 1967, Ralph A. Dungan was named the first Chancellor of Higher Education in New Jersey with responsibility for planning and implementing all public post-secondary education in the state during a period of unprecedented growth. He came to that position with extensive experience in the public sector; he served as a special assistant to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. In 1964, he was named ambassador to Chile for three years. Chancellor Dungan received his B.S. from St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, and an M.P.A. from Princeton University.

I have a deep prejudice on behalf of the learner. I am against both educational institutions and government agencies to the extent that they do not put the interests of the learner in the forefront of their thinking. This places a high premium on trying to define the mission of the institutions and helping the learner define what his objectives are for the educational experience. Furthermore, the designation of what is nontraditional depends on your point of departure; to a very large extent, traditional education has become increasingly nontraditional.

Many have expressed concern about whether state government or coordinating boards or individuals outside the educational mainstream ought to foster nontraditional forms of postsecondary education. While it all depends on the agency and the political context, in general I believe that the state should take the lead because, increasingly, there will be resistance toward the entry into the field of so-called nontraditional forms. For reasons of funding and the shrinking market, there will be a tendency for people to close ranks and protect the current "market place."

In many ways nontraditional education is the wave of the future for many young as well as more mature learners in the society. Consequently, we have to examine and be receptive to the new forms for the delivery of educational services. I have some concerns, however, about the way innovations in lifelong learning might be absorbed by governmental bureaucrats and educators and subsumed into yet another structure under an assistant commissioner for lifelong learning, with all the proper appurtenances.

by James M. Furman

James M. Furman is currently serving as Executive Director of the Illinois Board of Higher Education. Prior to that, he served as Director and Executive Coordinator of the Washington State Council on Higher Education, and has been involved in various activities designed to bring about cooperative educational efforts among states. He has worked with the Education Commission of the States and with the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education. He received his B.A. from Ohio State University.

To consider how a state goes about implementing nontraditional education, I would like to review some recent developments in Illinois. While some states are intrigued by nontraditional postsecondary education, largely because they see it as a means of reversing enrollment declines, Illinois first perceived it as a means of coping with rapid enrollment increases. Since that time, we have come to view it within what I believe is a better or more proper perspective: that of expanding educational opportunities.

Early in 1971, Illinois adopted a master plan which recommended the establishment "of a collegiate common market that utilizes the existing and developing resources of the public and private sectors to broaden and maximize educational opportunities and reduce duplication." The enrollment projections of this plan indicated clearly, however, that the collegiate common market was seen as a means of absorbing increasing numbers of students without massive expenditures for new personnel and new facilities.

At this time the idea of a statewide, free-standing nontraditional university has given way to a consortia of existing public systems to coordinate such approaches. Because of legislative interest, the establishment of a statewide coordinating commission for educational television was given priority over the external degree concept.

Under the Illinois Higher Education Cooperation Act, enacted in 1972 and administered by the Board of Higher Education, grants are made to institutions, public and private, for cooperative and nontraditional efforts. Funded

Dungan

In the nontraditional sector, as well as the traditional sector, the question that plagues us all is quality control: does accreditation, certification, licensing, or any other external procedure assure that whatever educational mission is chosen is sharply delineated, and that the results of the educational experience are what were advertised. Quality control is a particular challenge for the nontraditional area, perhaps because traditional higher education in the United States has been preoccupied with means rather than ends, and nontraditional education is primarily concerned with results rather than means. One reason we have difficulty assuring quality is that, historically, adequate techniques have not been developed to evaluate results. In evaluating traditional efforts, we examine the organizational structure, count the number of books in the library, the number of faculty with Ph.D.'s, etc. The concern is less with substance of education and more with form and process. It seems to me that if there is anything which is or ought to be the essence of nontraditional education it is a greater concern for substance than for form and process.

My experience, and I would imagine the experience of many institutions, would suggest that one should start small, move relatively slowly and deliberately, and not over-extend or over-promise. The primary burden of performing the evaluation should fall on the shoulders of qualified individuals who know what they are doing and have integrity.

Furman

for six years, HECA has helped to sustain nine regional student centers and consortia; cooperative graduate studies centers at several locations in the state; interlibrary exchange programs; expanded utilization of the University of Illinois Plato System; and, educational counseling and services to urban and rural disadvantaged groups and inmates of state correctional institutions.

In a recent evaluation of HECA, the following positive results were evident:

1. Additional students and adults are served at a reduced cost;
2. Educational programs are provided and expanded without expenditures for new facilities;
3. Substantial nonstate funds have been generated for the support of these programs;
4. These programs have served as a catalyst for a commitment to innovation and experimentation;
5. The programs have, in the main, stayed in existence after state funding has ended.

While Illinois has encountered major difficulties in implementing an external degree program, there have been successes at the state level in initiating a statewide educational television network, in the support of nontraditional cooperative regional program efforts, and in support of student aid.

Dungan

I must admit candidly that I have fewer reservations about the qualifications of the people involved than about the integrity of the examination process. From my vantage point, the licensing, accrediting, or evaluation process itself has lost integrity in the sense that we do not know what it is we are measuring or what results we expect; this is because we have so befuddled the mission of higher education that nobody knows what we are in the business for. What we must do is revitalize the education system and the evaluation process so that they satisfy us as individuals and professionals and then fulfill the needs of society. [Incidentally, if I here appear to be attacking a prestigious and important institution in American society (i.e., higher education), I am only doing so fully conscious that almost every other institution in society, be it medicine or law, is guilty of the same failing.]

In the financing of nontraditional postsecondary education much of the structural costs require a decision on how much is passed on to the person who receives the service and how much the state absorbs in a public institution. In general, our policy in New Jersey has been oriented towards the consumer picking up a larger part of the costs the farther into the educational process he or she goes. I believe each state has to work this out in the context of funding philosophy and the particular type of nontraditional efforts it is mounting and maintaining.

In starting a nontraditional program, one is faced with the choice of making it free-standing or integrated. Unless a traditional institution historically has been heavily committed to part-time students and extension work, the likelihood is that the institution will not be a favorable and suitable environment for a nontraditional program. If the influential people want to have full-time undergraduates in a campus-based environment, then don't try to sell nontraditional programs on the basis of declining enrollments. The rigidities of trade union funding and salary scales will serve as an overwhelming barrier. Consequently, in the public sector, I strongly recommend the free-standing model. The rules are not defined and you have greater opportunity and flexibility to assign an appropriate format and process.

In the next decade in the United States, I think that the necessity to adapt almost infinitely to different learner needs will require a structure which is as flexible as can be made. One must be able to establish and to dismantle without big expenditures, both the physical facilities and the faculty.

I also believe that the perception of the consumer of the future value of a college education, in economic terms, will attract more people into the nontraditional areas (self-study or auto-instruction of one kind or another) or a mixture of traditional mode and nontraditional mode because I think that nontraditional means will be delivered in a more economical fashion, depending upon the background of the student.

There is nothing magic about nontraditional postsecondary education. It gives an opportunity to do things that are not so easily done within traditional structural frameworks. Programs of demonstrable high quality justify their attendant costs and should be seriously considered.

Furman

These developments in Illinois have several implications for statewide strategies for nontraditional and cooperative education.

There must be a significant grassroots movement in cooperative and nontraditional education preceding any state involvement. Without such movement, there is nothing to coordinate. For example, an external degree program probably will come about, if at all, as a consortia movement rather than as a free-standing university. Even without a campus or permanent faculty, such a nontraditional university is seen as a threat to institutional autonomy and faculty prerogatives.

A major step in developing a coordinated strategy, however, involves the role of colleges and universities.

There is first a need to identify existing numbers of part-time students at institutions, those in degree credit and non-credit courses. This could be done through a sampling of existing part-time students to determine educational interests, goals, barriers, and expected future cycle of attendance. In conjunction with this sampling of existing students, there should be a random survey of the potential pool of postsecondary education students to determine needs, attendance rates and patterns, barriers, and the extent to which citizens are taking advantage of part-time education outside the traditional college and university structure.

As we attempt to devise strategies for giving more emphasis to the lifelong learning needs of individuals, there will continue to be several major problems.

One will be to persuade the faculty of colleges and universities to accept these educational thrusts as legitimate, and to respond to them in an innovative fashion. What will not work are on-campus programs slightly warmed over. We need, instead, bold new ideas that meet the diverse educational needs of individuals who, for the main part, consider themselves working members of society, not students. Yet, at the same time, they know they have educational needs and are willing to undertake such education if it is available to them in a reasonable and flexible way.

Another problem will be to devise means of integrating part-time education into the traditional budget structure of postsecondary education institutions. On the one hand, we should view the state's role as providing venture capital for programs that should become self-supporting to some extent. But if this is to be an ongoing effort of some priority, we need to ensure that these funds are not the first to go in times of fiscal constraint.

Finally, we need to work diligently to persuade state officials, especially legislators, that increased efforts in part-time education are not simply a fad, or a scheme to wring more money out of state coffers.

We need to persuade them of a fact that is becoming a reality for those of us in the profession. Education is not solely preparation for life, something that takes place only once during a specified age range. Rather, life itself is a continuous learning process that requires most individuals to seek additional educational opportunities at several points in their lives.

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